AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph that begins on page 2, line 6, with the following amended paragraph:

Prior art devices offer a single muting scheme. Some devices offer mute by cutting off any audio from being delivered from [[the local]] a local, or near-end, device to a remote, or far-end, device. Other devices offer mute by creating a noise signal that is delivered from the local device to [[a]] the remote device. Unfortunately, a single muting scheme may not be desirable in all situations for users of these devices. This constrained muting scheme can lead to inconvenience and frustration of such users, resulting in detrimental perception of value of these devices. Regrettably, this can negatively affect commercial viability in an increasingly competitive marketplace for such devices.

Please replace the paragraph that begins on page 5, line 13, with the following amended paragraph:

The present invention, according to a preferred embodiment, overcomes problems with the prior art by allowing the user to selectively predetermine the mute scheme at the near-end device. This allows convenience for both [[the]] a near-end user and [[the]] far-end users. The far-end users will not be confused due to the operation of the muting function and erroneously terminate and/or reinitiate calls, nor experience background levels of sound rendering the speaking voice unintelligible. The present invention allows the near-end user to select the preferred muting scheme for a given situation.

Please replace the paragraph that begins on page 5, line 21, with the following amended paragraph:

Two exemplary muting schemes are offered as muting features of exemplary embodiments of the present invention, e.g., "Full Mute" and "Concealed Mute". A first 'mute' scheme allows the near-end user to prevent their audio picked up by the device microphone to be sent to the far-end user, for instance in a conference call.

Please replace the paragraph that begins on page 6, line 1, with the following amended paragraph:

A "Full Mute" scheme allows the near-end user to prevent the near-end user's audio from being picked up by a microphone of the near-end user's device and sent to the far-end user's device, for instance in a conference call. In the "Full Mute" scheme, the least amount of energy, (sound), is transmitted by forcing the uplink audio to zero, no audio transmission. With this scheme, the far-end user should hear nothing (but often noise picked up in the transmission results in some noise level at the far-end). This absence of sound or audio interaction frequently leads the far-end user to believe the connection was terminated requiring far-end user inquiry or reinitiating of the communication path connection. This ~~first "mute"~~ "Full Mute" scheme is better applied to situations, such as a conference call, where the near-end user wishes to mute any audio from interfering with the sound signals from remote device(s).

Please replace the paragraph that begins on page 6, line 10, with the following amended paragraph:

There are times when the near-end user would desire to mute without the far-end ~~users~~ user's knowledge, for example, to converse with associates listening to the call, but with the full mute implementation it is likely the far-end user can detect the mute. These conditions can cause far-end user frustration. For such situations, [[a]] the "Concealed Mute" scheme is offered according to exemplary embodiments of the present invention. This mute scheme tries to overcome the silence issues (of the Full Mute scheme) by forcing the uplink audio from the near-end user to a value such as near the level of the background noise of the device ambient environment. In an optimum implementation of "Concealed Mute", the far-end user would not be capable of determining if the near-end user was muted, ~~not muted,~~ or not muted and just not speaking. One possible drawback with this approach is that the greater the ambient noise level is at the near-end; the higher the value of background noise the far-end user receives. In a conference call situation, the concealed mute noise from one or more lines could detract from the near-end user speech level reducing the speech from being heard by others on the conference call. So, this "Concealed Mute" scheme would likely be better applied to situations other than in a conference call.